

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 294107

FOL PRETORIA 6589 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO DAR ES SALAAM
BONN GABORONE LAGOS LONDON LUSAKA MAPUTO OTTAWA PARIS USUN
DEC 2, 1977 REPEATED TO YOU QOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 6589

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, A, SF

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: FIRST SESSION OF TALKS WITH SOUTH
AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

1. COMPARED TO THE OPENING SESSIONS OF PREVIOUS TALKS
BETWEEN THE CONTACT GROUP AND THE SOUTH AFRICANS,
THE FIRST SESSION (DEC. 2) OF THE CURRENT ROUND
PROCEEDED WITHOUT POLEMICS BY BOTH A OR THREATS TO END
THE TALKS FORTHWITH. THE ATMOSPHERE, HELPED BY THE
SETTING-AN INFORMAL GATHERING AT BRAND FOURIE'S HOME-
WAS CALM AND BUSINESSLIKE. THE DISCUSSION FOCUSED
ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS AND THE
ROLE AND SCOPE OF A UN FORCE. WHILE IN NO WAY
INDICATING THEY WOULD CONSIDER A REDUCTION OF THE
4,000-MAN SA FORCE WHICH THEY PROPOSED AT OUR LAST
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TALKS, BOTH A AND FOURIE SHOWED MORE CONCERN ABOUT
THE PRESENCE IN NAMIBIA OF A RELATIVELY LARGE UN
FORCE THAN THEY DID ABOUT OUR PROPOSAL TO LIMIT
SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS TO 1,500. FOURIE WAS PESSIMISTIC
REGARDING THE CHANCES THAT VORSTER WOULD ACCEPT OUR
IDEAS, EVEN THOUGH SOUTH AFRICA WANTED AN INTERNATIONALLY
ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. WE MEET AGAIN INFORMALLY THIS
EVENING WITH FOURIE; NO FORMAL SESSION, WITH OR WITHOUT
VORSTER, HAS YET BEEN SCHEDULED. THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT
OF THIS MORNING'S MEETING WAS PREPARED BY THE UK

EMBASSY, WHO PROVIDED A NOTETAKER.

2. BEGIN TEXT. THE CONTACT GROUP HELD AN INFORMAL MEETING WITH BOTHA AND FOURIE THIS MORNING WHICH LASTED FOR OVER 3 HOURS. WE SAID WE WERE AWARE THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS. THESE OFTEN AROSE DURING THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATING GENERAL PRINCIPLES INTO SPECIFIC PROPOSALS. WE BELIEVED THAT WE HAD MADE SOME PROGRESS IN THE SEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WHICH MIGHT COMMAND INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE.

3. IN HIS OPENING REMARKS BOTHA DWELT AT SOME LENGTH ON THE PROBLEMS THAT HE NOW FACED IN NAMIBIA. THE WHITES WERE SPLIT, AND THEIR ARGUMENTS WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY BITTER. BOTH WHITES AND BLACKS WERE ACCUSING SOUTH AFRICA OF A SELL OUT. IT WAS FEARED THAT IF SOUTH AFRICA WITHDREW ITS FORCES FROM THE NORTH, SWAPO WOULD BE ENABLED TO CONTROL OVAMBOLAND AND KAVANGOLAND. THIS IN TURN WOULD PROVOKE A REACTION FROM THE SMALLER SOUTHERN TRIBES, WHO WERE ALREADY TALKING OF A UDI. VORSTER WAS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE, AND THERE WAS A RISK OF POLITICAL DISINTEGRATION IN SWA.

4. BOTHA RECAPITULATED THE CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY TOWARDS NAMIBIA. SOUTH AFRICA'S GREATEST CONCERNS WERE NOW LESS CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBSTANTIVE THAN PSYCHOLOGICAL. IF THE PRESENT UNCERTAINTIES CONTINUED FOR LONG THERE WOULD BE A DETERIORATION IN THE SECURITY SITUATION AND A GENERAL LOSS OF CONFIDENCE. THE FIVE'S INTRODUCTION OF THE QUESTION OF MILITARY WITHDRAWAL "AT A FAIRLY LATE STAGE" HAD BEEN A SORE AND PAINFUL EVENT. THERE HAD BEEN LEAKS IN THE PRESS ABOUT THE PROPOSED REDUCTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES; THESE LEAKS HAD ALREADY LED TO AN INCREASE IN SWAPO INTIMIDATION. A CLASSIC PRE-INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE FOR POWER WAS NOW IN PROGRESS, AND TROOP REDUCTIONS WOULD MERELY LEAD TO FURTHER KILLINGS. SOUTH AFRICA HAD NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE ATTITUDE OF AN INDEPENDENT NAMIBIA: WHETHER CONTROLLED BY SWAPO OR BY THE TURNHALLE. IT WOULD BE HOSTILE POLITICALLY, EVEN IF DEPENDENT UPON SOUTH AFRICA ECONOMICALLY.

5. WE REPLIED THAT THOUGH SOUTH AFRICA MIGHT CONSIDER THAT IT HAD MADE ALL THE CONCESSIONS SO FAR, OTHER PARTIES DID NOT SEE THINGS THAT WAY. THE UN HAD COME TO ACCEPT ELEMENTS IN A SETTLEMENT THAT CONFLICTED WITH ITS PAST POSITION. SWAPO TOO HAD MADE CONCESSIONS ON THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE POLICE. WE HAD TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF BOTH SIDES' FEARS AND CONCERNS.

6. WE THEN EXPLAINED THAT SOME OF SOUTH AFRICA'S FEARS ABOUT SECURITY IN THE NORTH FOLLOWING A SETTLEMENT MIGHT CONCEIVABLY BE MET IF WE COULD SECURE ASSURANCES FROM NEIGHBOURING STATES, THAT THEY WOULD HONOR SUCH A SETTLEMENT. WE REMINDED BOTHA AND FOURIE THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF CUBAN FORCES IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA, BUT THAT THE FORMAL

PROPOSALS WHICH SOUTH AFRICA HAD SUBMITTED TO US AT OUR LAST ROUND OF TALKS HAD NOT ADDRESSED THEMSELVES DIRECTLY TO THIS POINT. WE RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING ASSURANCES THAT ALL PARTIES WOULD ABIDE BY THE TERMS OF A SETTLEMENT. IN OUR DISCUSSIONS IN ANGOLA WE HAD FOUND GREAT CONCERN THAT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD AGAIN INVADE THE TERRITORY, OR CONTINUE TO ASSIST UNITA. WHILE WE COULD GIVE NO GUARANTEES, WE THOUGHT THT THERE MIGHT BE A MUTUAL INTEREST IN DEFUSING THE BORDER SITUATION THROUGH A SEPARATION OF THE RIVAL FORCES. WE ASKED BOTHA WHETHER IN THSE
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CIRCUMSTANCES OF A REDUCED THREAT TO NAMIBIA, SOTH AFRICA MIGHT FEEL ABLE TO RE-EXAMINE ITS PROPOSALS. BOTHA REPLIED THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S PROPOSALS HAD BEEN BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE THREATS TO NAMIBIA HAD ALREADY BEEN REMOVED, AND THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY PRESENCE HAD BEEN KEPT TO A BARE MINIMUM.

7. AT BOTHA'S REQUEST WE THEN OUTLINED OUR PROPOSALS ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A UN MILITARY PRESENCE. (FYI: THE SOUTH AFRICANS PROBABLY WERE FULLY INFORMED IN ADVANCE ABOUT OUR PROPOSALS. WE SAW ON FOURIE'S DESK A COPY OF A REPORT FROM THE TANZANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY TO IT EMBASSIES ON THE CONTACT GROUP MEETING WITH NYERERE IN DAR. WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THEY ALSO HAVE A REPORT ON OUR MEETING WITH SWAPO. END FYI.) BOTHA SEEMED PLEASED THAT WE WERE NOT SEEKING A COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES. HE DID NOT TAKE EXCEPTION TO THE FIGURE OF 1,500 SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS, THOUGH AT THE END OF OUR MEETING FOURIE COMMENTED THAT IT WOULD BE HARD TO PERSUADE THE DEFENCE AUTHORITIES TO ACCEPT SUCH A REDUCTION EVEN IF NO UN MILITARY CONTINGENT WERE INTRODUCED. BOTH BOTHA AND FOURIE CONCENTRATED ON THE SIZE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE UN FORCE. THEY ARGUED THAT OUR FIGURE WAS MUCH TOO LARGE AND THAT IT WOULD CAUSE REAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS. THEY SAID THAT THEY HAD PERSUADED THE SOUTH AFRICAN CABINET, WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY, TO ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF UN MILITARY OBSERVERS. WE WERE NOW, HOWEVER, PROPOSING A TAKEOVER OF NAMIBIA BY A UN "TASK FORCE" LARGER IN SIZE THAT THE PROPOSED RESIDUAL SOUTH AFRICAN FORCE. THEY BOTH RAISED A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC ISSUES:-
(A) WOULD THE UN MILITARY CONTINGENT BE ABLE TO OPERATE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE NORTHERN BORDER?
(B) WOULD ITS FUNCTIONS BE TO SUPERVISE THE RESIDUAL SOUTH AFRICAN FORCE, OR WOULD ITS MANDATE GO WIDER?
(C) WHAT WOULD BE ITS COMPOSITION, AND WHAT SAY WOULD SOUTH
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AFRICA HAVE IN DETERMINING IT?
(D) HOW COULD SUCH A CONTINGENT ASSURE THE PROTECTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN CIVILIANS WORKING, FOR EXAMPLE, AT RUACANA?
(E) WOULD THE CONTINGENT HAVE ITS OWN TRANSPORT? (BOTHA

SAID THAT IT COULD NOT EXPECT TO USE SOUTH AFRICAN TRANSPORT.) WE EXPLAINED THAT IF WE WERE TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT TO THE RESIDUAL PRESENCE, ON WHICH SOUTH AFRICA WAS INSISTING, WE WOULD HAVE TO PROPOSE FOR POLITICAL REASONS A UN CONTINGENT WHICH EXCEEDED SOUTH AFRICA'S IN SIZE FOR POLITICAL REASONS. WE WERE NOT SEEKING A UN TAKEOVER: THE UN MILITARY CONTINGENT WOULD HAVE SPECIFIC OBSERVER FUNCTIONS, AND ITS ROLE WOULD NOT REQUIRE ITS OPERATING IN LARGE UNITS. WE URGED THE SOUTH AFRICANS TO REMEMBER THAT UN FORCES HAD DONE A USEFUL JOB IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ELSEWHERE, AND THAT TROOP COMPOSITION HAD NOT BEEN A MAJOR DIFFICULTY.

8. BOTHA REMARKED IN PASSING THAT THE CIVILIAN SIDE OF THE UN OPERATION DID NOT CAUSE THE SOUTH AFRICANS ANY PARTICULAR PROBLEMS. HE CLEARLY ENVISAGED A CIVILIAN CONTINGENT THAT COULD TOTAL AROUND A THOUSAND. REVERTING TO THE QUESTION OF ASSURANCES, FOURIE POINTED OUT THAT NEIGHBOURING GOVERNMENTS MIGHT FREELY AGREE TO THEM BUT BE UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT THEM. HE ACCEPTED, HOWEVER, THAT NO WATERTIGHT SYSTEM COULD BE DEvised. HE MENTIONED THAT THE ANGOLANS HAD AT ONE POINT PROPOSED A WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES TO 50 KMS FROM THE BORDER. HE THOUGHT THAT A MUTUAL DISENGAGEMENT OF FORCES SHOULD BE NOT LESS THAN 50-100 KMS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BORDER.

FOURIE URGED US TO RECONSIDER OUR PROPOSALS, BEFORE THEY WERE PUT TO VORSTER. HE BELIEVED THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD REJECT THEM DESPITE THE CONSEQUENCES, OF WHICH THEY WERE WELL AWARE. BOTHA HAD EARLIER SAID THAT SOUTH AFRICA WANTED AN INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT, IN ITS OWN BEST INTERESTS, AND NOT AN INTERNAL ONE. THE EXPERIENCE OF TRANSKEI AND INDEED LESOTHO PROVED THAT ONCE SOUTH AFRICA'S NEIGHBOURS BECAME INDEPENDENT THEY TURNED AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA AND THERE WAS NO MEANS OF CONTROLLING THEM. LACK OF INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION WOULD MERELY MAKE A NAMIBIAN GOVERNMENT, WHATEVER ITS COMPLEXION, CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE DETERMINED TO BITE SOUTH AFRICA'S HAND, EVEN THOUGH THE TURNHALLE WERE CURRENTLY PROFESSING LACK OF INTEREST IN AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT AND COMPLICATING BOTH'S TASK. BEFORE HE LEFT THE MEETING HOWEVER BOTHA COMMENTED SOMBERLY THAT HE SAW NO PROSPECT OF MOVING ALONG OUR ROAD.

9. WE TOLD THE SOUTH AFRICANS THAT WE WERE NOT PUTTING FORWARD FINAL IDEAS, AND CONSEQUENTLY WERE NOT ASKING FOR THEIR ENDORSEMENT OR REJECTION AT THIS STAGE. FOURIE WELCOMED THIS. HE INDICATED THAT, THOUGH THERE WAS NO MORE THAN A 20-1 CHANCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN ENDORSEMENT, OUR PRESENTATION SHOULD STRESS THE OBSERVER AND MONITORING DUTIES OF THE UN FORCE, AND THAT IF POSSIBLE IT SHOULD TRY TO BALANCE THE NUMBERS ON THE NAMIBIAN SIDE OF THE BORDER BY AN EQUAL NUMBER ON THE ANGOLAN SIDE. WE TOLD HIM THAT AT THIS EARLY STAGE OF OUR DISCUSSION OF GUARANTEES IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO GO INTO DETAILS OF WHAT NEIGHBOURING GOVERNMENTS MIGHT ACCEPT.

10. WE HAVE NOT YET DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND OF THE DATE FOR ELECTIONS. BOTHA, WHO WAS CLEARLY WELL BRIEFED ON THE OUTCOME OF OUR EARLIER TALKS WITH THE FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS, MADE GREAT PLAY WITH THE MERITS OF THE PANEL OF JURISTS. HE AND FOURIE WERE IN SUBDUED FORM. THEY CLEARLY ANTICIPATED OPPOSITION IN THE CABINET TO OUR PROPOSALS, AND THEY SHOWED DEEP CONCERN ABOUT LIKELY INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NAMIBIA. THEY WERE SCEPTICAL ABOUT SWAPO'S INTEREST IN AGREEING TO A SETTLEMENT THAT PROVIDED FOR FREE ELECTIONS, BUT THEY SHOWED NO HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE CONTACT GROUP AND INDEED SAID THAT THEY APPRECIATED OUR EFFORTS. END TEXT. UNQUOTE
CHRISTOPHER

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